

NEWS

From the Office of

Brad Mitzelfelt

Supervisor, First District
San Bernardino County

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For information, contact
David Zook (909) 387-4830
www.sbcounty.gov/mitzelfelt

Officials Present IE Recovery Plan in Washington, D.C.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Members of a recently formed public benefit corporation visited legislators and policy makers in Washington, D.C. this week to educate them about their efforts to tackle the Inland Empire's foreclosure and economic woes.

"The timing of us being here is incredibly important," said San Bernardino County Second District Supervisor Paul Biane, who proposed the creation of the Inland Empire Economic Recovery Corporation (IEERC) and serves as Chairman of the agency's Board of Directors. "Things are changing by the minute, by the hour, by the day as to what the stimulus package is going to look like."

The IEERC will purchase foreclosure properties in the Inland Empire using a mix of public and private dollars. It will then contract with local businesses such as painters, plumbers, real estate agents, mortgage brokers, property managers, etc. to rehabilitate and sell foreclosure properties. Profits generated through the sales of homes will be recycled into the Corporation to purchase and rehab additional foreclosure properties.

The Corporation will ensure foreclosure properties are purchased for primary residences, and it will also help prevent speculative buying by out-of-town investors, who would likely turn homes into rentals or, worse, board them up until the housing market returns.

Supervisor Biane and two other members of the IEERC Board of Directors – San Bernardino County First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt and Arrowhead Credit Union President Larry Sharp – visited each member of the Inland Empire's Congressional delegation including Congressman Jerry Lewis, Congressman Ken Calvert, Congressman Buck McKeon, Congressman David Dreier, Congressman Joe Baca, and Congressman Gary Miller during their two-day trip. The officials also met with officials from the U.S. Department of Treasury, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Republican Housing Subcommittee.

"We talked about the need for TARP (Troubled Asset Relief Program) funding for the Inland Empire Economic Recovery Corporation and about the need to shape regulations so that regional public agencies like IEERC are the preferred buyers of local assets owned by the Federal Government," said Mitzelfelt.

"I applaud San Bernardino County's efforts in taking the innovative approach of a public-private partnership to help solve the region's housing crisis," Congressman Miller said. "Regional public-private partnerships like this can help retain the value of real estate assets and stabilize communities."

IEERC officials also talked to law and policymakers about the Corporation's other efforts to tackle the region's growing foreclosure crisis.

"They were very receptive to our efforts and ideas, but they also agreed with us that buying and reselling foreclosures is just part of the solution," Biane said. "We also need to work with and educate homeowners so they can avoid foreclosure in the first place."

The Corporation's efforts include hosting home foreclosure prevention seminars throughout the region to give struggling homeowners an opportunity to speak directly with their lenders and agencies such as HUD that may be able to provide assistance. The first such seminar is scheduled to take place on March 28 at the Jessie Turner Community Center in the City of Fontana.

This week, San Bernardino Associated Governments – which represents all of the County's 24 cities as well as the County of San Bernardino – approved a work plan that will provide \$50,000 to help IEERC and HUD host the home foreclosure prevention seminars.